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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

**FOUR AREA MEN ARE CONVICTED ON MULTIPLE CHARGES IN CONNECTION WITH
THE ARSON OF FOUR GROCERY STORES TO COLLECT INSURANCE PROCEEDS**

St. Louis, Missouri: Four area men have been convicted of multiple charges in connection with the arson of four grocery stores and the attempted arson of two more businesses to collect over \$3.5 million in insurance proceeds, United States Attorney James G. Martin, announced today.

This case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Bomb and Arson Squad and the Postal Inspection Service. Assistant United States Attorneys John J. Ware and Matthew Drake prosecuted the case for the U.S. Attorney's Office.

ZEYAD ABDELJABBAR, a/k/a Steve, 39, of Woods Hill Drive, Town & Country, 63017; **WALID IHMOUD**, a/k/a Wally, 54, of the 7800 block of Chalmette Drive, St. Louis, 63042; **CHARLES D'ARY**, a/k/a Chuck, 55, of Venice, Illinois; and **MOHAMMAD ALMASSRI**, a/k/a Mike, 40, of the 8300 block of North Broadway, St. Louis, 63147; were convicted of conspiracy to commit arson; arson; attempted arson; and mail fraud. The 13-day trial was held before Senior United States District Judge Stephen N. Limbaugh.

Each defendant faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison and/or a fine of \$250,000, on Count I, Conspiracy to commit arson; and twenty years in prison and/or a fine of \$250,000, per count on the arson, attempted arson and mail fraud charges. Sentencing has been set for July 28, 2005 for defendants Abdeljabbar and Ihmoud, and July 29 for D'Ary and Almassri. At the conclusion of the reading of the verdicts, Judge Limbaugh ordered all four defendants remanded into custody pending sentencing.

According to testimony presented at trial, between August 2002 and the present, Abdeljabbar, Ihmoud, D'Ary, and Almassri participated in a conspiracy to destroy four businesses owned by Abdeljabbar and one business owned by Ihmoud to collect the insurance money. The fires occurred at St. Louis Supermarkets located at 8350 North Broadway; 4331 Natural Bridge in St. Louis and 8352 Frost in St. Louis County; and Quality Bargains, Inc. located at 8350 North Broadway, St. Louis and owned by Walid Ihmoud. On each occasion the defendants filed insurance claims on the damaged or destroyed businesses. The amount of money the defendants attempted to collect from various insurance carriers as a result of the fires is more than \$3.5 million. The defendants also attempted to set fire to St. Louis Supermarkets on 2700 S. Grand and again at 8350

North Broadway. All the fires were set and attempted to be set within one month.

A mistrial was declared on co-defendant SAID JARABAA, a/k/a Sammy, 32, of the 1800 block of Cochran Place, St. Louis, 63106. A new trial date will be set in the future.